July 31, 2020

Charter School Institute
1600 North Broadway #1250
Denver, CO 80202

Dear Charter School Review Team:

Please accept the attached Kwiyagat (Bear) Community Academy's charter school proposal, which has been a dream for the Towaoc community for many years. This year seems to be the right time to put our thoughts into action. In conjunction the partnership with Native American Community Academy Inspired School Network (NISN) and many other local organizations and institutions, the charter application has come to life. The Ute Mountain Ute Tribal Council endorses the goals of the school and Elder Committee agrees to support the school's mission to "ensure an educational program where the Nuchiu culture and language guides the educational experience and is characterized by small class sizes with an interdisciplinary, indigenous, and project-based approach that results in high academic expectations and desired character skills, personal wellness and community involvement."

To ensure success and fulfill the mission, the school plans to begin small and grow within the capacity of the school community. The inaugural class of Fall 2021 will begin with 30 students in kindergarten and first grade and then grow to 90 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. At that point, the school will consider whether to expand grade level offerings.

The school has chosen to partner with the NISN, which supports leaders in indigenous communities to develop schools that provide rigorous academic curriculum aimed at college preparation while also promoting indigenous culture, identity and community involvement. The proposed Kwiyagat Community Academy's core values are embodied in the four school goals: (1) understanding Nuchiu (Ute) language and culture, (2) being competency in all academic areas, (3) displaying positive character and healthy lifestyle and (4) engaging in community connections. The project-based approach will integrate Ute language and culture into all subjects and the student-led Presentations of Learning will display their work in community forums.

In addition to working closely with NISN, the school will utilize a strong network of local departments, such as Ute Mountain Ute Head Start, Health, and Finance Department and regional organizations including San Juan Board of Cooperative Services, Region 9, Fort Lewis College, Southern Ute Montessori Academy, and Battle Rock Charter School and many others. These partnerships will strength over time and allow this small and unique school to thrive.

The proposed school is also fortunate to have an appropriate facility available to house the school for the next three years with Tribal Council support. The school will not need to pay rent, utilities or maintenance costs for the facility, as a show of the commitment from the Tribe to the success of this school. School staff will be Ute Mountain Ute Tribal employees and subject to tribal employment policy and employee benefits. Discussion about a future location for a permanent site are already underway.

Perhaps the most challenging portion of the application is the development of proper replacement policies related to Colorado Revised Statutes as the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe is subject to federal law, not state law. The Tribe has many laws and policies that meet or exceed standards related charter school

related C.R.S, however, many other policies will need development. Fortunately, the Tribal Attorney has been in several conversations with CSI staff and legal services and a path forward is envisioned.

Another recognized challenge for the school will be creating the necessary short-term and long-term financial resources and infrastructure with PPOR funding for only 30 students in the first year and the gradual expansion to 90 students. However, the school plans to contract with Gina Schlieman of GPS Strategies to help us apply for the 2020-21 Colorado Charter School Program for start-up schools, which would provide significant financial support for the first three years. The long-term budget at full capacity will allow the school to become financially viable. On the positive side, enrollment plan of 15 students per grade is realistic, understanding some of the 25-30 students who graduate from Head Start may want to attend schools in Cortez. Furthermore, small class sizes will give the school the opportunity to give individualized attention to a student population that has significant historical disadvantages, relative to the non-Ute population.

We are grateful for the opportunity to apply to the Charter School Institute as to realize many dreams, borne from a history of educational disenfranchisement. We sense the Towaoc and Ute Mountain Ute community is on the verge of a new era. We look forward to our partnership.

Togwaoc (Thank you)

Tina King-Washington

Tina King Washington, K-12 Education Director
Ute Mountain Ute Tribe